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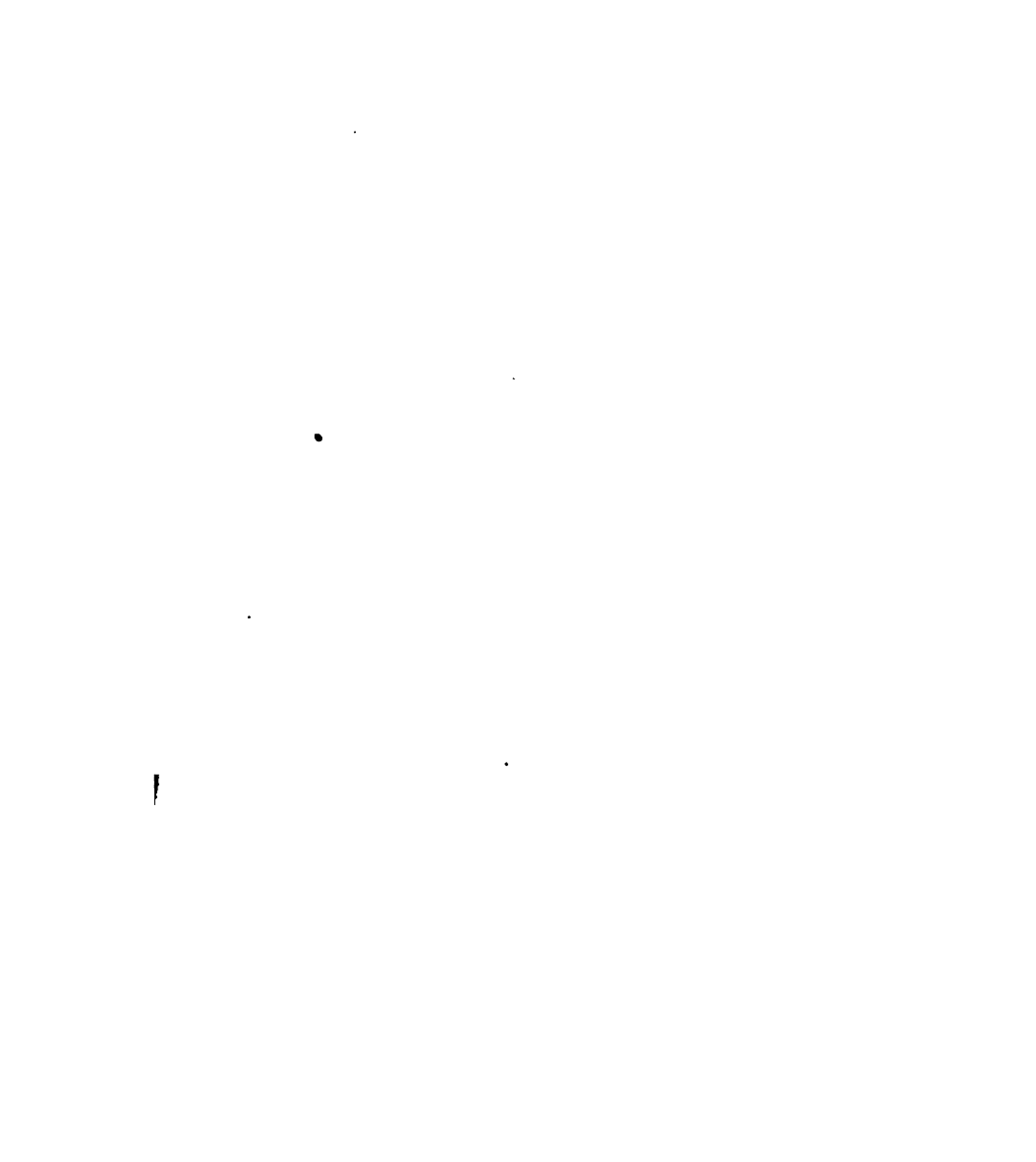
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OF BOSTON

October 22, 1912







O.V.
OPUSCULA

No. 20.

How Dreams Come True.

A Dramatic Sketch in Two Scenes.

BY

JOHN TODHUNTER.

*Specialy written for the Conversations of the Sette of Odd
Volunteers at the Grosvenor Gallery, July 17th, 1890, by
his Oddship Brother Charles Holme, reigning
President of the Sette, to whom long life and happiness
wisteth his well-wisher,*

THE BARD.

Imprinted by BEMROSE & SONS,
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Hayes fund

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Non ego ventosa venor suffragia plebis. HORACE.

+++++

**This Edition is limited strictly to 500 copies, and is
integrated for private circulation only.**

No.

Presented unto

.....
by
.....

CHARACTERS.

ALDOBRAND ... *Hans Schwarz's Apprentice.*
BERTHA ... *Hans Schwarz's Daughter.*
GRETCHEN ... *Bertha's Maid.*

HOW DREAMS COME TRUE.

THE scene represents an oak-panelled room in the house of Hans Schwarz, a Master-Printer of Nuremberg. At the back of the stage, deeply recessed in the wall, is a leaded glass window with roundels, through which an orchard with apple trees in full blossom is seen. Beneath the window is an oaken seat. On the back wall, R. of the window, is a hanging cupboard, with old books on a shelf and on the top a number of tankards, glasses and flagons. In the corner (L) hangs a crucifix, with brass receptacle for holy water; in front of it a *prie-dieu*. The ceiling (rather low) is of wood, and is supported on great oaken beams. In the side-wall (R) near the back of the stage is a door. In the side-wall (L) nearer the

front of the stage, a curtained opening leading to the printing room. An oaken table stands near the side wall (R), with cloth, plates, glasses, &c., not yet removed after a meal. An arm-chair with leathern cushions, and a footstool (L.C.)

Time—Early sixteenth century.

Three years are supposed to elapse between the first and second scenes.

The story on which this little piece is founded occurs in *The Antiquary*, Chap. xi., where Jonathan Oldbuck narrates it as a passage in the life of one of his ancestors.



HOW DREAMS COME TRUE.

SCENE I.

ALDOBRAND *discovered kneeling on the floor, packing a knapsack.* BERTHA, *passing the window, peeps in through an open casement, and then enters (R.).*

BERTHA.

(Beginning to clear the table.)

So thou art going forth into the world,
A dreamer, still a dreamer, Aldobrand !
But, tell me, art thou sad to say farewell
To Nuremberg, my father's house, and me ?

ALDOBRAND.

A man must see the world, sweet Mistress
Bertha !

I am glad to see it. After the 'prentice years,
The years of wandering—hey for liberty !

BERTHA.

So thou art glad to leave us? *Man* forsooth !
Call'st thou thyself a man, the gosling down
Scarce yellow on thy chin? Ungrateful boy,
Thou who hast shared our house, eaten our
bread,
These seven long years—and now trudge forth
and quit us
Without the heaving of one kindly sigh.

ALDOBRAND.

Nay, sweetheart, I am glad and sorry too ;
I love old Nuremberg, your father's house,
And—all it holds. My 'prentice years, you
know,
Were not all flowers, yet now they seem to me
A cloistered Paradise, whereon I gaze
Through the fast-closing doors. But close
they must,
And forth must I. I am glad and sorry too.

BERTHA.

My father's rule was something stern, I know.

ALDOBRAND.

And his hands hard. If cunning came by
blows,
I should be now a master of my craft :
Many a shrewd bang hath dusted my brown
jerkin,
For which I bear no grudge.

BERTHA.

Dost thou remember
How in the orchard once I found thee lying,
With tear-stained face, under yon apple-tree ?

ALDOBRAND.

That was the day, desolate with more than
blows—
Your father broke my model.

BERTHA.

Child as I was,
The very sunshine seemed far-off and cruel,
Smiling upon the sorrow I beheld.

ALDOBRAND.

Your father's wrong cut to the roots of life,
Made me an outlaw in an unjust world,

I strove for his approval, hoped for praise,
And won but obloquy : I never dreamed
Invention was a crime. That stinging pain
Made me a man. I was but a child before ;
My skin-deep sorrows were a thoughtless
child's :
Since then I have been thinking.

BERTHA.

"Twas ill done,
Were he ten times my father, 'twas ill done,
In that one wrathful moment so to mar
Your work of many an hour. I marvel still
How a just man could find it in his heart.

ALDOBRAND.

Ay, like the Pharisees, just men are just
Within their little circle : all beyond
Is but a wilderness wherein they grope,
And, killing Christ, they know not what
they do.

BERTHA.

You are grown a mine of strange and gloomy
thoughts ;
My father, like the Pharisees, kill Christ !

ALDOBRAND.

I spoke but in a figure, of all men.

BERTHA.

I fear you hate my father.

ALDOBRAND.

Not a whit.

He is your father. No, I hate him not.

We hate but with a kind of sympathy ;

Some men sometimes are too far off for hate.

BERTHA.

Forsooth ! Well, I can hate at any distance,

Strike back my striker and be friends again :

But you are unforgiving, unforgetting.

ALDOBRAND.

I can forgive, perhaps ; not quite forget,

But, hate the man who taught me all I know ?

Not I !

BERTHA.

Good boy ! But even I remember

The very process of the tragic scene

You made me play that noontide, o'er the
corpse

Of your blind kitten of a printing press.
I shut my eyes and see it all : the trees,
Just whispering in the heat, dropt now and
then

A wizened apple on the sunny grass.
One plumped upon your forehead, yet you
moved not ;
And I crept close, and saw where you had laid
Your mangled model tenderly by your side,
Like some slain creature you had loved, I
thought.
You never made another ?

ALDOBRAND.

With my hands,
No. With my brain a better, which defies,
Where it lies hid, the world's contemptuous
heel.
It shall come forth some day, and print for you
Faster and fairer than that lumbering thing
That makes the old master's pride. He broke
my model,
Well-nigh my heart, my thought he could
not kill.

BERTHA.

Dost thou remember how I came to thee,
My apron full of cherries, and stood there,
Dumb, every limb of me a several ache
Of shyness, with a sense of some cold air
That strangered us?

ALDOBRAND.

I was a sullen lout
And glowered aloof.

BERTHA.

O how I pitied thee !
Yet could not choose but mark, hating myself
The while for noting, what a sorry sight
Thou wast, with thy red eyes and redder nose,
So ugly—O so ugly !

ALDOBRAND.

Like enough !
So looked not you to me Your pity seemed
Wonderful as the angel's when he came
To outlawed Hagar, o'er the desert sands.

BERTHA.

Yet when I crept to kiss thee, thou didst frown,
And with a shrug repulse my pouted lips—
Not angrily, but with a patient scorn.

ALDOBRAND.

Whereat you wept.

BERTHA.

And thou didst pity me,
Deigning to let me feed thee with my cherries
Quite graciously.

ALDOBRAND.

We munched them share and share,
They tasted well, those cherries, after all ;
For your sweet consolation made them sweet.

BERTHA.

Then with the stones we played at cherry-pit,
And O, but I was glad to see you smile !

ALDOBRAND.

Ah, we were children then ! That's over now.
Will you be sorry, just a little sorry,

When I am gone, and sometimes send a
thought
After me, out into the wide, cold world?

BERTHA.

Ay, many a thought; thou art the only brother
Ever I had, and I shall miss thee sorely.
Why, I should miss my father's leathern chair,
Or my dead mother's foot-stool—senseless
things,
But bits of my old home; how much more
thee,
The comrade I have played with, talked with,
dreamed with,
Fought with and kissed again. Yes, I am
sorry,
And, for a token of my melancholy,
I never spoke so long without a jest.

ALDOBRAND.

But I am not your brother. And to-day,
I would be something more, or something less.

BERTHA.

Be then my friend, that's something less and
more.

There is my hand, so let us part good friends.

ALDOBRAND.

Nay, hear me, Bertha, you must hear me out.

BERTHA.

Spoil not our parting, then, with foolish words.

ALDOBRAND.

Fear not! But listen: I go forth to-day
Into the world, to do what I have dreamed,
To make my thought my deed.

BERTHA.

I know thy thought:
A printing press, a magic printing press,
That shall make stale the legends of old Faust.

ALDOBRAND.

There's magic in a thought, I know none other.
Your father's idle 'prentice, as he deemed me,
(You know I was not idle) is thus far
A sorcerer, and no more.

BERTHA.

Poor Aldobrand!

Hast thou a spell that can subdue the world,
With all its malice, all its evil tongues?

ALDOBRAND.

I think I shall succeed. I think my power
Lies here: I care not what men deem of me,
What slights, what shames, what names they
stick upon me,
So I be fair-assoiled of mine own soul.
Your father called me shameless—so I was,
A dull unheeding block—and so I was,
When passion and not justice ruled his tongue;
Yet often one stray word stabbed and let loose
A hidden well of shame within myself,
Till I was drowned in it. I *will* succeed,
Or never more see Nuremberg and you.

BERTHA.

Thou wilt succeed, I know thou wilt succeed,
For thou goest plodding on, a brick a day,
Till thou hast built the house planned in thy
thought:
My dreams are only dreams that ne'er come
true.

ALDOBRAND.

The house I build I build for you to dwell in,
If I come back, I shall come back for you.

BERTHA.

Ye gentle saints, the boy is making love!

ALDOBRAND.

No, I'm not making love: love has made me.
O Bertha, every drop that swells my veins
Is warm with love of you! My love for you
Makes every trivial heart-beat like the throb
Of a great nation's marching tune.

BERTHA.

No more!

Thou foolish Aldobrand, I have no patience
With playfellows turned lovers! Shall I jog
To homely wedlock by this beaten track,
As country dames to market on a pillion?
Not I, be sure.

ALDOBRAND.

I will come back for you.

BERTHA.

Pshaw! there are other women in the world,
And other men, I trow.

ALDOBRAND.

There's but one woman
In the world for me.

BERTHA.

We are but boy and girl,
Let us keep open that sweet chapter still,
Nor ever turn the page.

ALDOBRAND.

Time turns the page.
Canst thou not love me, Bertha?

BERTHA.

So I do,
Placidly, as a girl may love a boy,
Not that grand, blind, uncomfortable way
You dream of now. I love thee, Aldobrand,
Therefore I cannot love thee. Can I change
All in a moment, open in my heart
New eyes to look on thee?

ALDOBRAND.

Not in a moment,
But in three years—perhaps. I am grown a
man :
I shall come back a man, even in your eyes.

BERTHA.

And find me something else than what you
dream.

ALDOBRAND.

And yet the same. Bertha, I'll never marry,
Or I will marry you.

BERTHA.

(*Curtseying*). Gramercy, friend !
There are two words to that. *I'll* never marry,
Or, if I do, I will not marry you.
I have known thee far too long, know thee
too well.

ALDOBRAND.

'Tis a good fault. To keep that knowledge
green,
Keep this, the half of a split silver groat.

(He flings a ribbon, to which half of a silver coin is attached, round her neck.)

Here, round my neck, see ! I have hung its fellow,
And there I'll wear it, Bertha, till I die !

BERTHA.

(Tearing off ribbon and coin, and flinging them upon the floor.)

The thing feels like a chain. I'll wear no chains,
No troth-plight tokens.

ALDOBRAND.

Well, fling it away :
Fling by me and my love ! I'll stay no longer
To vex you.

(Goes to the window and looks out, then comes back.)

Come with me. I would once more
See the old places with you, look my last
On the old home ; and then farewell indeed !

BERTHA.

I'll go with thee, O my poor^d Aldobrand,
I would not have thee bind thyself to me !
But see ! (*Picks up the coin.*)

I will not lose this foolish thing,
But keep it for thy sake, to know thee by
When thou comest back, a man. Not round
my neck, though.

ALDOBRAND.

Your father comes. One kiss !

BERTHA (*Kissing him*).

A woman's kiss means nothing.

ALDOBRAND.

But a man's means much. Remember,
Three years, three days, and I'll come back
again.

(*As they move towards the door, the curtain falls.*)

SCENE II.

(BERTHA *discovered alone, spinning.*)

BERTHA.

Three years, almost three days ; and yet he
comes not !

What fortune hast thou found in the great world,
My dream-led Aldobrand ? Will thy dreams
tell thee

What changes thou shalt find in Nuremberg :
My father dead, and I his wealthy heiress,
O'erthronged with suitors ? If thou keep'st
the heart

Thou hadst when thou went'st forth, methinks
that now

It should have jealous throbs. Yet where-
fore so ?

Now I see men, I am out of love with men !

I see none to my mind. (*Calls.*)

Gretchen !

GRETCHEN.

(*Without.*)

Anon !

(Enter GRETCHEN.)

BERTHA.

Well, Gretchen, are we fairly rid of this last brace of gallants?

GRETCHEN.

Ay, mistress ; but methinks 'tis a woeful pity to send away so many a fine young man.

BERTHA.

And many an old one too !

GRETCHEN.

I count that none so great a pity. But the sighs of your rejected suitors have filled Nuremberg, ay, and all the free towns of Germany to boot, with sick winds.

BERTHA.

It is not I who reject them, but my new press yonder. Let them lay the blame on their own want of skill. I'll have no man for master who is not master of his craft.

GRETCHEN.

I doubt it be some godless thing, this new printing-press of yours, that came to you from Heaven knows where, and that, now it be come, no man can work. And you to lay the possession of your hand and fortune on the working of it ! I doubt it be ill-done, mistress.

BERTHA.

Why? Wilt thou set down the honest mystery of printing among the black arts? But for this press, it came not up through the floor, smelling of brimstone, but by Fritz the carrier's waggon, with my name inscribed upon it in a fair current hand. 'Tis a press of most quaint devising, though it be not for all men to work. (*Knocking heard.*) See who knocks.

(*Exit* GRETCHEN.)

That young gallant with the purfled sleeves had a fair face enough but such sparks as he are not for me, nor I for him. Well, I am in God's hands.

(*Re-enter* GRETCHEN.)

What now? A new suitor?

GRETCHEN.

Even so, mistress; but such a suitor—the worst that came before was a beauty to him.

BERTHA.

Why, what manner of man is this one?

GRETCHEN.

What manner of man? I doubt he be no proper man at all.

BERTHA.

Nonsense, wench! What semblance is he of? Of what favour? What complexion? What may be his age? Goes he on two legs like a Christian?

GRETCHEN.

O! a thing he is—a thing to fright a naughty babe with—worse than the bogey-man: a very scarecrow, a rag-bag: a bent back, a huge belly, a hobbling gait, a sour visage, a great

nose—O, a most outrageous great red nose that roasts your very eyes but to look on!—and to keep it company a bleary eye that scowls at you from under the black brow—and but one, but one, for the other is naught but a black patch. The saints keep me from a one-eyed man!

BERTHA.

What does he want?

GRETCHEN.

Yourself, mistress, yourself!

BERTHA.

But what, think'st thou, can he be?

GRETCHEN.

I am in two minds about that. Something whereof if holy water will not rid us, nothing else will. Have you holy water handy?

BERTHA.

Under yon crucifix. But what are thy two minds?

GRETCHEN.

Truly I am in more than two minds about him. First I thought he was the Wandering Jew himself—if he be nothing worse, for he limps on the left foot, very notably. 'Tis just a hundred year since the Wandering Jew came by Nuremberg.

BERTHA.

An old wife's tale!

GRETCHEN.

Nay, 'tis more than an old wife's tale, I warrant you. The old Burgomaster's wife's cousin's aunt—ay, 'twas her aunt on the mother's side—

BERTHA.

(*Shuddering slightly.*) No more of that. But come, thy second mind?

GRETCHEN.

My second mind was not so reasonable. I thought him no worse a customer than the Pied Piper—yon rat-catching carle that danced away the children of Hameln.

BERTHA.

Pshaw! Why not the Flying Dutchman come ashore? They are notable printers in Haarlem. Let me see the man.

GRETCHEN.

But mistress, dear mistress, I think I know who he be. I think I know who he be.

BERTHA.

And what is thy last mind?

GRETCHEN.

(*Whispering.*) Marry, 'tis the Elf-King out of the Oberwald. He sent you the press to snare your fancy, and now he will work it, and you are but a lost maiden.

BERTHA.

The Angels be my guard! Shew him in. He is no worse, I wager, than some jug-bitten toss-pot.

GRETCHEN.

Alas! it may be death—or—worse than death to look on him. (*Whimpering.*) He limps sorely on the left leg.

BERTHA.

Bid him limp in, then.

GRETCHEN.

All holy saints watch over us !

(Exit.)

BERTHA.

If he work the press, save with my good will, he is a cleverer wight than I take him for.

Re-enter GRETCHEN (R.), shewing in ALDO-BRAND, disguised as described in the text. He salutes BERTHA with quaint ceremony. GRETCHEN remains in the background, watching anxiously.

BERTHA.

What is your pleasure, sir ?

ALDOBRAND.

(In a feigned voice.) I come from far,
Seeking your hand.

BERTHA.

And fortune, I presume ?

ALDOBRAND.

Rather my own, held fast in that fair hand.

BERTHA.

You know what trial of your skill awaits you?
There stands my printing-press. With your
own hands

And that good press, you must imprint for me
A sheet of copy fairer than the best
My father deemed the glory of his time.

ALDOBRAND.

Where is the text that I must go beyond?

BERTHA.

Hung in the printing-room.

ALDOBRAND.

And who the judge?

BERTHA.

Marry, for fault of better, that am I.

ALDOBRAND.

I ask none better, madam. I will not say
Be now a gentle judge: be only just.
You stake your hand for prize of my success?

BERTHA.

That is my bargain.

ALDOBRAND.

To the trial then.

(As he is about to enter the printing-room, GRETCHEN dashes holy water upon him with the sprinkler. He turns and grins at her with a horrible grimace, as he passes in. She screams and runs out (R.) He draws the curtain behind him and during BERTHA'S next speech, the press is heard at work.)

BERTHA.

Pacing about in growing agitation, and pausing now and then to listen.)

If this should prove indeed some spirit unblest
My sins give power to! Yet what sins are mine
To draw so strange a horror on my head?
Hark! does it work? No, no, that cannot be.
And yet, methinks it works: what if these
tales

Of days far-off, another world than mine,
Whereat I shuddered with a pleasing sense
Of awe, safe and aloof, be true to-day,

For me ; and I the mark for unseen powers
To practise on with their unhallowed spells !

(Listens.)

It works !

(Kneels on the Prie-Dieu.)

Redeemer of all sinful souls,
Save me now !

(Dips her finger in holy water, and crosses herself, then springs up.)

Better sink in some swift death
Than keep this bond.

(Looks at the door of the printing room.)

With what a hideous look
The Thing went to the trial. O Aldobrand,
Could I but see once more thy honest face !

(Lays her head upon the table.)

*(Re-enter ALDOBRAND, with a printed sheet.
He shews it to BERTHA. She drops it
with a cry and reels back, her hand over
her eyes.)*

BERTHA.

O this is magic !

ALDOBRAND.

(Picking up the sheet.)

Is my skill at fault,
Or have I so surpassed your paragon
That you stand dumb with wonder?

BERTHA.

(Hesitating.)

'Tis well done.

ALDOBRAND.

Look on these head-lines, and this colophon,
When saw you ever such a masterpiece
Pulled from your father's press?

BERTHA.

I must speak truth,
Never.

ALDOBRAND.

Then you allow my victory?

(He approaches her. She recoils.)

When shall the bells ring for our wedding-
day?

BERTHA.

When they toll slowly for my funeral.

ALDOBRAND.

Will you not keep your word? I claim your
hand.

BERTHA.

My hand offends me, and shall be cut off
To pay your claim.

ALDOBRAND.

The hand without the heart
Were a cold gift. You played at Providence,
Will you not love the husband fate assigns you?

BERTHA.

How can I love—O God!

ALDOBRAND.

So grim a bridegroom?
As Beauty loved the Beast. I'll prove as kind.

BERTHA.

O then be merciful, take all my fortune,
But set me free!

ALDOBRAND.

Perhaps you are not free?
There is some fancy hidden in your breast,

That blinds you to the beauty of the soul
This uncouth form conceals. O could you see
As I would have you see, the love I bear you
Would so transfigure all this outward show
That I should stand before you in the shape
Most pleasing to your fancy.

BERTHA.

You speak strangely
But in a strain that gives me one wild hope :
Say I did love another—say I waited
Long for his coming.

ALDOBRAND.

I would wait no longer
To be the plaything of your coquetries.
I must have all or nothing : will not have
Your hand without your heart. Here I
renounce
All claim upon your fortune or your person,
As I renounce these outward lineaments
That win your loathing.
(*Tears off his beard and the patch over his eye.*)

BERTHA.

(*Startled.*)

Can the devil go mad ?

ALDOBRAND.

Ay, I am lunatic, and in my luns
Endure strange transformations. (*Tears off
his false nose.*)

Dost thou know me?

BERTHA.

No!

ALDOBRAND.

(*Tears off his wig.*)

I am quickly coming to myself,
Dost thou not know me yet?

BERTHA.

(*Recognising him.*) Not yet, methinks!

(*ALDOBRAND pulls a pillow from under
his vest, and straightens himself.*)

I do begin to guess thee.

ALDOBRAND.

Know me, then.

(*He takes off his ragged cloak and stands before
her in the dress of a journeyman printer.*)

Bertha! I said I should come back a man;
I have come back, and with the self-same heart

I took from Nuremberg. How speaks my fate?

(He pulls out his half coin and comes close to her).

Where is the unmated half of this poor groat,
My heart has warmed so long in all its wander-
ings.

BERTHA.

(Smiling and showing hers).

Here, Aldobrand, and by some wicked charm
The thing is round my neck.

ALDOBRAND.

(Embracing her). Warm, too. And see
How the two halves fit, and are one again.

(He looks round).

The old house once more! But is my dream
come true,
And canst thou love me, Bertha?

BERTHA.

Safe in thine arms
From the new frightening of thy goblin double,
It seems the only natural thing to do ;
I think I loved thee always, Aldobrand.

ALDOBRAND.

What flattering loyal things these women say,
Murmuring the sweet romance of their own
tongues,
Like holy credos, and believed as fondly !

BERTHA.

Nay, in the fair religion of my love,
Soft flatteries have no place ; and my heart's
truth
Is truth upon my tongue. O welcome home!
Hard was thy fight out in yon striving world.

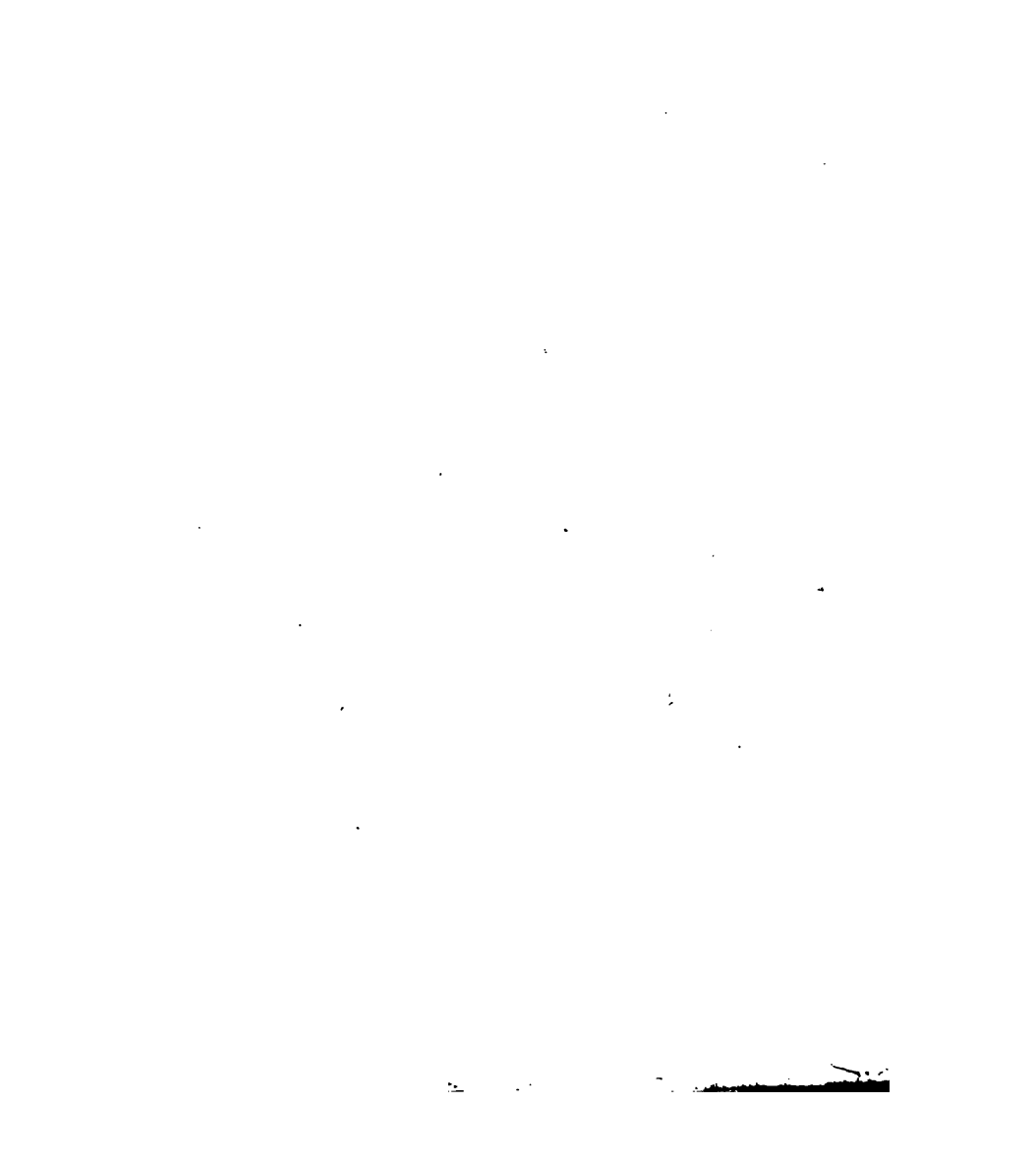
ALDOBRAND.

But now 'tis won, and I am crowned by thee.

BERTHA.

Who endures conquers. Many a 'prentice
brave
Lives to reign master where he served as knave.

CURTAIN.



O. V.

A

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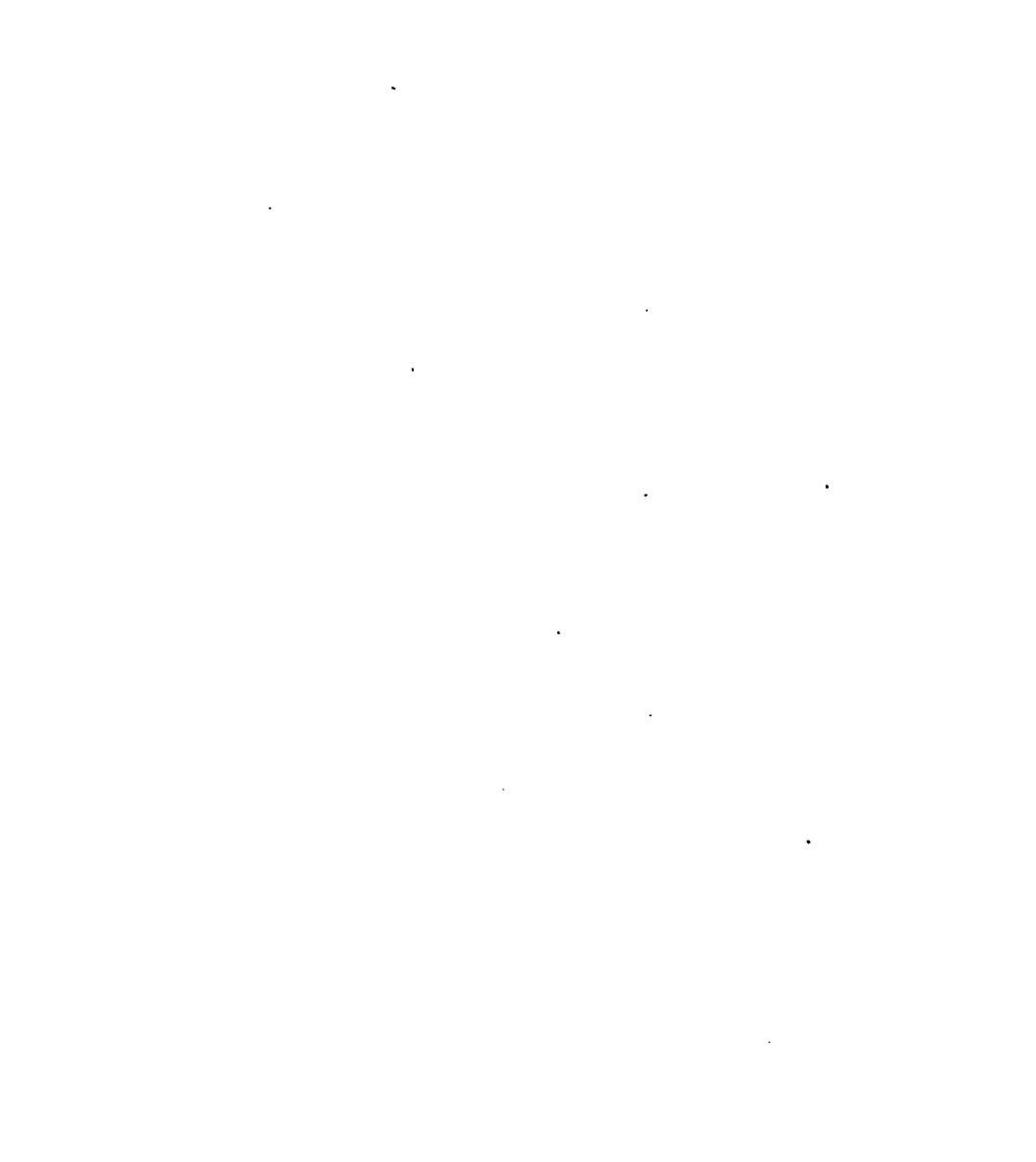
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